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Matsya-6000

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INDIA'S MAIDEN TRIALS FOR DEEP SEA EXPLORATION SUCCESSFUL

India's fourth generation deep-ocean capsule Matsya-6000 has successfully completed its wet testing at the L&T harbour near Chennai

FIRST STEP TOWARDS MANNED DEEP SEA MISSION

The first manned harbour trial of Matsya-6000 was conducted by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, between Jan 27 and Feb 12. It is the first step towards manned deep ocean exploration. In the next stage, the submersible will undergo shallow-water demonstrations at depths of up to 500 metres by the end of this year

TO REACH 6,000 METRES BELOW OCEAN BY 2026

- The fortnight-long harbour trials, at a depth of two metres, assessed Matsya-6000's performance across various parameters
- Matsya-6000 is expected to reach a depth of 6,000 metres in the Indian Ocean by 2026. It is a part of the Centre's Samudrayan project to study underwater resources and biodiversity | P11

Three
PERSONS CAN BE ACCOMMODATED INSIDE MATSYA-6000

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

FOOT-IN-MOUTH

BJP, Congress lock horns over Sam Pitroda's 'China' view

PREETHA NAIR & RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

AMID sharp criticism from the BJP, the Congress on Monday distanced itself from its leader Sam Pitroda's remarks on China, and said his views do not belong to the party. China remains India's foremost external security and economic challenge, Congress said.

Pitroda, chairman of Indian Overseas Congress, in an interview to IANS news agency, said the perception of China as a threat to India is being blown out of proportion and that New Delhi should stop considering Beijing as an enemy.

Clarifying the party's stand, Jairam Ramesh, AICC general secretary (communications) said on X, "The views expressed by Sam Pitroda on China are most definitely NOT the views of the INC ... China remains our foremost foreign policy, external security, as well as economic challenge. The INC has repeatedly raised questions on the Modi Govt's approach to China, including the PM's public clean chit to it on June 19, 2020."

I don't know what is the threat from China. China is around... China is growing .. you got to respect that

Sam Pitroda in an interview to IANS

At a press conference, BJP national spokesperson and MP Sudhanshu Trivedi said Pitroda's remarks symbolise the mindset of the Congress and are in line with its leaders' statements in support of China. "The 'mohabbat ki dukan' of the Congress is for anti-national forces, be it George Soros or China," Trivedi said.

In the past too, Pitroda's controversial comments have put Congress in a spot. In May last year, he resigned from his post for allegedly making racist comments during a podcast. However, he was reinstated after the 2024 elections. Congress had to scramble for cover after Pitroda endorsed a US model inheritance tax law in India last year. On the eve of Ram temple inauguration, Pitroda had said that unemployment and inflation are more real issues than Ram temple.

Immediate measures to regulate passenger flow at 60 busy rly stations across India

Holding areas, new SOPs to ease crowding at stns

Passengers try to board an overcrowded train amid a huge rush owing to Mahakumbh Mela, at Patna railway station on Monday | PTI

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

IN the wake of the stampede at the New Delhi railway station on Saturday, the Ministry of Railways on Monday announced a slew of measures to prevent untoward incidents as it identified 60 railway stations across the country that experience high footfalls.

To begin with, the railways will develop 'permanent holding areas' in these busy stations to manage crowds especially during peak times and strictly regulate their flow to platforms.

Passengers will have to wait in the holding areas and allowed to enter the platform only as per the departure timing of their respective trains. This is to avoid overcrowding of station areas.

In response to a query from this newspaper, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said railway experts will design access routes from holding areas to platforms in such a way that there is no scope for overcrowding.

One such holding area was set up at the New Delhi station on Monday itself. The same will be extended to key stations in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and other states that regularly witness large crowds.

The 60 stampede-prone stations have been identified based on the number of departing and originating passengers. They include Patna, Ara, and Buxar in Bihar; Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh; and Surat in Gujarat, besides New Delhi, Bangalore, and Coimbatore.

The rail ministry is in the process of developing a comprehensive manual on crowd management by consolidating existing provisions and a standard operating procedure would be developed to manage passenger surges during festivals and special events.

Also on the cards is a nationwide campaign to educate passengers on the dangers of sitting on stairs, which often leads to stampede-like situations during crowded times.

"Feedback from all stakeholders, including vendors, would be taken into account, and related problems would be resolved within six months," Vaishnaw added. P12

DEVOTEES STRUGGLE AT PATNA STATION

Patna: Prayagraj-bound passengers at Patna railway station on Monday faced a tall order while boarding trains. Eye-witnesses told local newspapers that passengers forced open bolted doors of Vikramshila Express and Magadh Express and occupied toilets, while many were seen hanging by the doors

VAISHNAW RULES OUT CONSPIRACY

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Monday ruled out any conspiracy behind the New Delhi stampede and claimed there was also no extraordinary rush at the platforms at the time of the incident. "No conspiracy looks at the moment," he said while interacting with mediapersons

CURBS ON PLATFORM TICKETS

The Northern Railway on Monday announced that platform tickets would not be sold between 4 pm and 11 pm for the next one week at the station to ensure proper crowd management. Over 10 trains were diverted from Delhi owing to the restrictions on the New Delhi Railway Station

Gyanesh Kumar picked as CEC, Vivek Joshi is EC

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday picked Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar as the new Chief Election Commissioner.

A 1988-batch IAS officer from Kerala cadre, Gyanesh Kumar will replace Rajiv Kumar, who demits office on Tuesday.

Haryana Cadre IAS officer Vivek Joshi has been appointed Election Commissioner.

The announcement came shortly after a meeting of the selection committee also comprising Union home minister Amit Shah and the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi.

During the meeting, Rahul asked the government to defer the decision on the new CEC till February 19 when the Supreme Court will take up a petition challenging the constitution of the selection committee. He questioned the composition of the committee and the numerical advantage enjoyed by the ruling party.

According to sources, Rahul left the meeting after submitting his dissent note and was not present when the shortlisted names were discussed. The meeting lasted 30 minutes and was held at the South Block office of the prime minister.

The appointment of the new CEC has become a political flashpoint between the ruling party and the Opposition.

Gyanesh Kumar

Congress slams govt

Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said by removing the Chief Justice of India from the selection committee, the government has made it clear it wants to control, and not preserve the credibility of the EC. AICC treasurer Ajay Maken, said, "When the SC has indicated that they will hear the case on the constitution of the committee on the February 19, this meeting should have been postponed."

As per Section 7 of the Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 to the law, the President will appoint the Chief Election Commission and other Election Commissioners on the recommendation of a selection committee headed by the prime minister and consisting of the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and a member of the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the prime minister.

Kumar is the first CEC to be appointed under the new law. His term will run till January 26, 2029.

A record! Siddu to present 16th budget on March 7

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah will present the state budget for 2025-26 on March 7. The size of his 16th budget is expected to be over Rs 4 lakh crore.

Revealing this to reporters here on Monday, Siddaramaiah said the budget session will begin on March 3 with the governor's address. After a discussion on the budget, he will give his reply by March-end.

Siddaramaiah has presented 15 budgets so far. He presented eight budgets as chief minister and seven as deputy CM and finance minister, which is a record in Karnataka.

Former CM Ramakrishna Hegde had the record of presenting 13 budgets till Siddaramaiah presented his 14th in 2023.

Asked why many beneficiaries have not received money under Gruhalakshmi and Anna Bhagya schemes, the CM said he will not stop the schemes. "If there is any delay, I will ask my officials to look into it," he added.

On Metro fare hike, he said the Union government had constituted a committee headed by a retired high court judge, which recommended the hike.

The CM said that his government is ready to hold zilla and taluk panchayat elections anytime. The elections will be held as per Supreme Court's order.

'It is up to high command'

About the buzz over change of guard in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that it is up to the Congress high command. It will decide, he added.

EXPRESS READ

MIDDAY MEALS

No chikkis, only eggs, bananas

Bengaluru: The Department of School Education and Literary on Monday ordered that government schools should stop providing peanut chikkis as supplementary nutrition along with midday meals. Instead, schools can serve eggs and bananas as supplementary nutrition. The department took this decision following reports that peanut chikki are high in sugar and unsaturated fats | P7

HARASSER NABBED

Protests in KIIT over suicide

Bhubaneswar: A 20-year-old Nepali student's suicide after being harassed by a fellow student on Sunday evening sparked protests here at KIIT University. The university on Monday asked all Nepali students to vacate the campus but revoked the decision after a diplomatic intervention from Nepal. The victim was a third year B Tech student. The man who harassed her was nabbed by police from Bhubaneswar airport | P7

Debt-ridden Mys man kills mom, wife, son, hangs self

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

A man allegedly murdered his mother, wife and son and later ended his life by hanging himself at his apartment in Mysuru on Monday. Police said Chethan, 45, his wife Rupali, 43, son Kushal, 15, and mother Priyamvadha, 62, were found dead at 'Sankalpa Serene' apartment in Visvesvaraya Nagar on Mysuru-Mananthavadi highway. Chethan left a note stating that he took the extreme step because of financial problems and he was responsible for the death of his family members.

While Chetan's body was found hanging from the ceiling, the bodies of his wife and son were found on the floor. His mother's body was found on the floor of an adjacent flat where she lived.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Chethan allegedly gave food laced with poison to his family members, tied their hands and legs and later smothered them to death with pillows. Before ending his life, Chethan called his brother Bharat, who lives in the US, around 4 am and told him that he was committing suicide. Bharat immediately alerted Rupali's parents, who live in Kuvempunagar. By the time Chethan's in-laws arrived, all four were found dead.

Chethan (centre) along with his wife Rupali and son Kushal | EXPRESS

City police commissioner Seema Latkar, DCP M Muthuraj and Vidyaranyapura inspector Mohit visited the apartment. Latkar told reporters that Chethan hailed from Hassan. He was a labour contractor and used to send workers to Saudi Arabia.

"He purchased the apartment in 2019. His son was a Class 10 student. Chethan's elder brother lives abroad. He called Rupali's parents early Monday and asked them to rush to Chetan's apartment. When they came to the apartment, the four were dead. Chethan and his family visited Gorur temple in Hassan district on Sunday evening. The autopsy report will be ready in two days. It will reveal the cause of death," Latkar said.

A case has been registered based on a complaint by Rupali's father Sethuram. CONTINUED ON: P7

PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT CASE POSTED TO APRIL

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Monday deferred hearing to the first week of April on a batch of petitions in connection with the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The CJI-led bench of Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice P V Sanjay Kumar expressed its displeasure that far too many intervention applications had been filed in the case. "We will not take up the Places of Worship Act matter today... Too many petitions filed. List sometime in April. There is a limit to interventions being filed. Enough is enough," the bench said, making it clear that the top court would not entertain any new petitions on the matter. The case will now be heard by a three-judge bench.

Introduced during the Ayodhya movement, the Act seeks to protect status quo of all religious structures as they stood on August 15, 1947, and prohibits courts from entertaining cases which dispute the character of places of worship. The Congress, the RJD, CPI (M), and IUML sought intervention pleas. BJP's Ashwini Upadhyay had challenged the law in 2021.

SHAKEN AND UPROOTED

An uprooted tree at Jheel Park in Delhi's Dhaula Kuan, the epicentre of the 4.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Delhi-NRC on Monday morning | EXPRESS

₹5k fine for using potable water to wash cars, gardening

Use of potable water for purposes other than drinking has been banned. The order has been issued keeping in mind the need to provide drinking water to all

BWSSB order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

ANTICIPATING scarcity during summer, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has decided to take stringent action against those wasting drinking water.

In an order issued on Monday, the board stated that a fine of Rs 5,000 will be imposed on individuals using drinking water for gardening, washing cars, cleaning roads, etc. An additional Rs 500 per day will be slapped on those who continue to violate the order.

In the order, board chairman Ram Prasat Manohar said use of potable water for washing vehicles, gardening, construction of buildings and roads, fountains or for purposes other than drinking has been banned. This is in line with Sections 33 and 34 of the BWSSB Act, 1964. The fine will be imposed under Clause 109.

The order stated that those who spot such violations may call BWSSB call centre 1916 and lodge a complaint. The city has a population of nearly 1.4 crore. Last week, the board issued an order fixing the price of water supplied by tankers following allegations that tanker owners were fleecing people.

For a distance between 5 and 10 km, 6,000 litres of water supplied by tankers will cost Rs 750. For 8,000 litres, Rs 850, and for 12,000 litres, Rs 1,200, according to a circular.